



Cover Letters

A cover letter is important for many reasons. It demonstrates your interest in the job, your ability to do the job, introduces the reader to your resume, your ability to write, and you can request a meeting or an interview. Always submit a cover letter with your resume.

Cover letters should be short and to the point. As a general rule they should only have three paragraphs. The letter should be printed in black ink with your name and then your signature at the bottom. It is important to send the letter to the person who is doing the hiring. If you don't know the person's name, call the company and get the name and the correct spelling.

The first paragraph should state the reason you are writing. Mention the title of the job you want. You should also demonstrate any positive knowledge you have about the company. If you decide not to include an objective in your resume, this is the place to put that type of information.

The second paragraph should let the employer know why he or she should hire you. Explain the skills, knowledge, and abilities you have that fit the job and how hiring you would benefit their company. Do not write about what the company can do for you.

The third paragraph should let the employer know what your next steps will be. Will you contact her to set up an interview? Also, it is important to restate your interest in the job and the organization. Thank the person for his time and make sure you include your contact information.

Your cover letter provides you with the opportunity to be creative and to toot your own horn, but don't over-do it. Keep it simple and to the point.

Remember your cover letter should be perfect. Have someone proofread it for you to make sure there are no spelling errors. You want to make a good impression so the employer will want to interview you! ☺

The Resume:

Your resume should let the employer know as clearly and quickly as possible what you can do for that organization or company. It is your primary sales tool to market yourself to an employer. The main purpose of your resume is to get an interview.

If you don't have a resume the first step is to make a list of your education, employment history, skills, and accomplishments that relate to the job you want. Make sure the information is accurate and complete.

Next, research resumes. You can find helpful information on the internet. Look at examples of resumes given on web sites. You can even Google resumes for specific occupations and see what other people's resumes look like. There are also templates available on the web you can use, and some organizations require you to fill in their resume templates.

Some of the old resume rules don't apply anymore. For example, the length of your resume doesn't have to be limited to just one page, it depends on your industry and the jobs you are applying for. Every resume doesn't have to have an objective at the top. You should include an objective only if you think it will help get you an interview. Tailor your resume to meet the specific needs of your targeted industry, job, employer and company.

Decide which format you will use for your resume and target it to the job you are seeking. This means you need to update your resume every time you apply for a different job and use language from the job announcement when it is appropriate. Targeting your resume is a very powerful method to set yourself apart from the competition and capture the employer's interest. This is a critical step when there are many people applying for the same job.

Your Ticket to a Job Interview

There are basically three main formats for resumes: Chronological, Functional, and Combination.

The Chronological format's emphasis is placed on a chronological listing of employment and employment-related experience. This is a good format if you have a consistent employment history, with no gaps, and past employment experiences are related to your current employment goals.

The Functional format highlights skills, experience, and accomplishments without identifying specific dates, names, and places. Employment history is de-emphasized by placing it near the bottom of the resume. This format works well for those changing careers or those who are new graduates. However, some hiring authorities don't favor this format because they suspect it is used to hide something.

The Combination format brings together both the Chronological and the Functional resumes. This format begins with a summary of your most impressive qualifications, skills, abilities and accomplishments. This information is followed by an employment history and education section that supports the statements made in the top portion.

It is important to put the most impressive information first and make sure it is perfect, because employers only look at each resume for about 10-15 seconds before they determine whether they will interview you. Remember, your resume is your marketing tool to convince the employer you should be interviewed for the position! ©

DO:

- Make sure there are no errors or misspellings
- Have someone proof read your resume
- Make sure you have a version you can email or cut and paste
- Include your name, mailing address, telephone number, and email address
- Update your resume for each job using key words from the job description
- Keep it simple, straightforward, and make sure there is white space
- Focus on your accomplishments, not just a laundry list of your job duties

DON'T:

- Include hobbies unless they relate to the job
- Put personal information about marital status, age, religion, etc.
- Put references on your resume, have them available on a separate document
- Use pronouns like "I" or "me"
- Write a general objective statement
- Ever lie

General Tips:

- Use 8 ½" by 11" white or off-white high-quality paper
- Use a standard one-inch margin
- Keep all section titles pulled to the left side of the paper
- Do not use abbreviations
- Avoid unusual or exotic fonts
- Use font changes such as underlining, italics, caps and bold options sparingly
- Do not right-justify
- Do not include photographs or graphics
- Keep the resume 1 to 2 pages
- Always include a cover letter with your resume

Emailing Your Resume:

- Use the job title or job code in the "subject" line of your email
- Send your resume as an attachment
- Save your resume with your name as the filename (i.e. "johndoesresume.doc") rather than "resume.doc." This will help distinguish your resume from others.
- Make sure to include contact information in the body of your email in case the employer has trouble opening your attachment



For more information:

- www.jobs.utah.gov
- <http://careers.msn.com/>
- <http://career-advice.monster.com/resumes-cover-letters/careers.aspx>

